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SUBJECT: COMPTON FUNERAL HIGHLIGHTS U.S. TIES

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Sir John Compton's funeral was extremely well-attended, with 1000 guests at the cathedral and hundreds more outside. Attendees included diplomatic dignitaries from around the world. Compton's friendship with the United States was well-documented in the provided program. The funeral was well-covered on local media. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On September 18, St. Lucia commemorated the passing of its founding father and sitting Prime Minister, Sir John George Melville Compton, 82. Roughly 1000 people gathered in the Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, including dignitaries from throughout the Caribbean and all continents, including a 12-person delegation from Taiwan. HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson and the Ambassador represented the USG.

¶3. (U) In addition to the 1000 invited guests, hundreds of citizens gathered in the neighboring Derek Wolcott Park, viewing the funeral on a provided jumbotron. Hundreds more waited outside police barriers controlling access to the site. Following the funeral, the crowds of pedestrians followed the final procession from the cathedral to the Castries waterfront. The numbers in attendance, the masses in the procession, and the cheers inside and outside the cathedral as speakers recounted Compton's many accomplishments left no doubt of the level at which St. Lucia reveres Compton.

¶4. (U) Published programs illustrating Compton's public and private life included President Bush's letter of condolence and photograph on a prominent page. Likewise, photographs of Compton with Presidents Reagan, Bush Sr., and Clinton were included in the program. Local media in St. Lucia and Barbados gave the event broad coverage, both electronically and in print. The funeral itself was carried live on local television.

¶5. (U) COMMENT: The government declared two weeks of mourning for Compton, a period that doubled as a grace period for the new government to settle in. With the funeral and related ceremonies completed, the opposition will begin its attacks on the new administration. Also, the people will begin to critically view the actions of the new government. Given the turmoil surrounding Compton's illness and possible successor, the United Workers Party government is on a short leash, with many citizens exclaiming they voted for Compton to lead St. Lucia, not the rest of the party. To be successful, King will have to minimize internal party conflicts and exude confidence as prime minister. We will follow up with the new government quickly to encourage them to maintain Compton's strong pro-U.S. policies, something we expect King, as Compton's hand-picked successor, is likely to do.

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